

# THE LION WORKS SCHOOL



## De-escalation plan

The Lion Works School is a nurture space. We engage with students to understand their behaviour and to support them to use coping strategies and self-regulation techniques in order to succeed.

Whilst we would like all pupils to feel safe, settled and clam at the Lion Works school, we understand that this is not always possible, and that pupils can sometimes struggle to process their thoughts and feelings. This emotional regulation struggle can lead to a young person becoming very heightened and to feel the need to act out (or up). The purpose of this document is to help staff have a greater understanding of a young person's escalating behaviours, and how best to manage these.

Below is a graph of the stages that heightened pupils go through, when struggling to internally regulate. Our aim is to keep/return pupils to phase 1 (calm) or, on occasions where this is unsuccessful, ensuring the pupil returns to a calm state (phase 7).



### Phase 1: Calm

This phase is the pupil's normal/'happy' stage. This is individual to each pupil and does not necessarily mean smiling, joking etc. but can be described as the pupil's "equilibrium" state.

## Phase 2: Trigger

In phase 2, the pupil tends to display more defiant/out of character behaviours. For example, a young person who is usually chatty becoming withdrawn or 'moody'. Whilst exact triggers can be difficult to identify, pupils in phase 2 tend to be more sensitive to perceived negative/critical remarks. Some pupils may also actively search out a reason to escalate and can appear rude/short or easily offended. It is imperative that adults recognise potential signs of escalation and try and help the pupil back in to phase 1. This is detailed in the "Escalation" column.

## Phase 3-4: Agitation and Acceleration

If a pupil continues to struggle to regulate, they may move in to phases 3 and 4. Phase 3, in particular, can occur quickly and sometimes without warning. The pupil will usually show physical signs of agitation (for example raising their voice, standing up/moving around or complete disengagement/refusal to follow instructions). This stage is often closely followed by the "acceleration" phase. The previous behaviours (defiance, rudeness, restlessness) become much more pronounced and direct (often accompanied by verbal threats or inappropriate comments). If a pupil escalates to this stage, it is important to try and isolate them from the other pupils and non-essential members of staff. The pupil is unlikely to be able to talk about their thoughts/feelings (as they will have most likely entered survival mode- fight, flight, freeze). It is not advisable to try and unpick the incident during this phase; ensure the pupil is in a safe quiet space (such as an empty classroom or self-regulation space) and avoid initiating unnecessary conversation. Make sure the pupil is supervised at all times but respect their personal space. Do not try and retain the pupil- follow at a safe distance if they attempt to move around.

## Phase 5: Peak

During this phase, the pupil tends to be out of control and presenting as a risk to both themselves and others. This is usually characterized by physical/verbal aggression, destruction of property, self-injury or attempts to escape. It is important to remain calm and notify a member of the senior leadership team. Keep a safe distance from the pupil and avoid engaging in unnecessary conversations. The focus is on maintaining the safety of both the pupil in question, as well as the other people in the vicinity. If the young person attempts to leave/self-isolate do not retain them as this will likely result in a further escalation of behaviours. If needed, remove other pupils/adults from the area (as opposed to moving the pupil who is escalating). In this stage it may become necessary to physically intervene if a student is attempting to 'flee' from a safe location to an unsafe location. This can in most cases be avoided by forward thinking in stages 2, 3 and 4.

## Phase 6-7: De-Escalation and Recovery

Once a pupil has passed their emotional "peak", they will start to de-escalate. This is characterized by re-engagement in conversation, denial/minimisation of previous behaviour, accusing others (for their escalation) or withdrawal (shame). Although the pupil will most likely be able to engage in conversation, this is not the time to unpick the recent incident. Supporting adults must remain calm and reassuring to prevent a re-escalation. Avoid blaming the pupil or trying to force an apology. Try and isolate the pupil (if not already done) to avoid feelings of shame or blame (which can cause

them to become heightened again). The “recovery” phase is the opportunity to teach the pupil and try and develop strategies to avoid future escalations. This would normally be done by a member of senior management or a staff member with whom the pupil has a good relationship. The focus is on helping the pupil identify and evaluate their decisions during the previous incident. The pupil should be helped to identify when things started to unravel and be aided to develop appropriate strategies for future situations. This is not a punishment and should not be used to “discipline” the pupil (all sanction procedures will be handled by the SLT).

It is essential never to sanction a student if their behaviour is an expression of their additional needs. We must remain reflective and self-aware as professionals and collaborate with specialist staff in order to remain reflective practitioners.

Equilibrium 1 (pre-incident)	Stage 1: Escalation	Stage 2: Crisis Level	Stage 3: De-escalation	Equilibrium 2 (post-incident)
Pupil is calm. "Everything is going ok".	<u>Intervention goals:</u> Defuse stress and return to equilibrium.	<u>Intervention goals:</u> Prevent further escalation, keep pupils/staff safe, support de-escalation, avoid property damage.	<u>Intervention goals:</u> Support self-control, reengage, support emotional regulation.	<u>Intervention goals:</u> Teach skills, self- reflect, develop coping mechanisms, support learning.
<u>Behaviour Signals:</u>  Examples: Chatty, happy, compliant, engaging.	<u>Behaviour Signals:</u>  Examples: Quiet/withdrawn, rigid posture, low-level defiance, disengagement in learning ("what's the point?"), closed facial expressions.	<u>Behaviour Signals:</u>  Examples: Continuation/escalation of stage 1 behaviours, trying to self-isolate, more aggressive posturing and interactions, refusal to follow adult instruction.	<u>Behaviour Signals:</u>  Examples: Calmer, slight re-engagement/acknowledgement of supporting adults, able to sit down or remain stationary, realisation of previous actions ("I shouldn't have done that").	<u>Behaviour Signals:</u>  Examples: Chatty, happy, compliant, engaging, remorseful.
<u>Learning goal:</u>  To assist pupil in maintaining equilibrium and co-operative frame of mind.	<u>Triggers:</u>  Examples: lack of sleep/rest, anxiety (appearing stupid around peers for example), worry about home/personal life, peer interactions.	<u>Triggers:</u>  Examples: Being talked at (rather than to), direct orders/instructions, being singled out (anxiety), criticism.	<u>Triggers:</u>  Examples: Continued pressure to engage (if pupil has chosen to isolate themselves for example), punitive/direct approach, repetition/unpicking of recent events.	<u>Learning goal:</u>  Identify triggers, support in talking through self-regulation strategies, explore current understanding/awareness of incident.
<u>Strategies:</u>  Positive reinforcement, empathetic approach, validation of thoughts/feelings, being accessible to talk to. Identify coping strategies (where to	<u>Strategies:</u>  Encourage pupil to enact coping strategies: self-isolating to "calm down", talking to trusted member of staff, allowing pupil time and space to process their thoughts and feelings.	<u>Strategies:</u>  Ensure pupil is supervised at all times (either in same room or outside but within earshot/eyeline). Don't force a conversation ("What's wrong?"). Be calm and reassuring ("take the time	<u>Strategies:</u>  Validate how pupil is feeling ("I understand why you are upset"), calm manner. Distract with discussion about unrelated, light-hearted topics. Don't attempt to unpick incident. Reassure pupil that	<u>Strategies:</u>  Good opportunity to teach and coach. "What can we learn from this?" "how can we react differently in future?". Take a "I am helping you to learn self-regulation" approach rather

go to calm down, how to signal the need to talk etc).	Where possible, respect pupil's wishes ("I want to be left alone").	you need"). Don't block path or attempt to restrain. Follow at appropriate distance. Reassure pupil. Encourage pupil away from other pupils.	they can take needed time and space.	than a "this is what you did wrong" approach.
<u>Things to avoid:</u>  Asking direct/personal questions (relationship dependent), direct/accusatory statements ("why haven't you done your work").	<u>Things to avoid:</u>  Unstructured situations with low adult supervision, trying to unpick what isn't working well (relationship dependent), trying to move the pupil, threats (of sanctions for example)	<u>Things to avoid:</u>  Blocking path, stern mannerisms, trying to unpick what did/is going wrong, excessive talking, not leaving a "safe" distance between self and pupil.	<u>Things to avoid:</u>  Unpicking incident, forcing pupil back into class/task, punishment, reintegrating pupil into social group.	<u>Things to avoid:</u>  Forcing pupil to "apologize" formally (specifically in group situations), underlying reason for incident (unless prompted by pupil), over explanation of consequence or incident, use of negative emotional language ("that hurt my feelings").

